

**Testimony on Budget cuts Department of Public Health
Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs
Medical Home Initiative at FAVOR
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I am the statewide Coordinator for the Medical Home Initiative at FAVOR, a Dept of Public Health program: Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs. I am also the parent of 2 young adults with special needs. I bring my years of experience raising them to help other families.

Nationally, across the lifespan caregivers report the need for respite to be the number one unmet or under-met need in caring for their family members. Our families indicate in program surveys that their needs for respite is very important and very hard to find and afford.

Respite allows families a much needed break from care giving to allow them to continue to care for their loved ones. For the majority of our families, this program is the only help they receive. It is a very small but important program to them. I have attached a chart to my testimony showing how many families and in which towns received funds for respite last year, as well as a document of quotes from some families who have been funded in the past.

It is amazing how much these families can get for the \$500 in funds they receive to get a break from the stresses of care giving for a child with serious medical health care needs. Many of our families have medically fragile children who really require a nursing level of care but they either have no coverage, very limited coverage, or are on wait lists for that care. Many do 24 hour a day care seven days a week with no help. Some families use the funds for time with their spouse or other children. Some do family activities, while others use it to hire a mother's helper to allow them to do normal things most families do.

Families continue to call our office for resources as they attempt to deal with accepting new diagnosis for their children, learning what it means for their future, and how best to deal with all this new information being sent their way. It is comforting to them to hear there is some help available, that other families are dealing with similar situations, and that there can be positive outcomes for their children and families. They are thankful to learn how other families have moved forward, that they are not alone, and that we are here to help support them down this road.

Our contract, which is only part of the total program, provides the Extended Services Funds, Respite Funding, and some Care Coordination and Transition Services to families. This is my 9th year running the program. Since its inception, our program's budget has been reduced from \$700,000 per year to \$340,290 this year. Over the last calendar year our budget incurred \$220,332.00 in budget cuts. Because our program has less than 2 FTE staff, most of these reductions translate into direct losses to families in need. That is more than a 50% cut over that time, while we currently serve about 40% more children. Currently about 2,800 children are getting some sort of services from our office.

As the result of the most recent budget cuts, we have had to make drastic changes to the eligibility requirements for our program. We have lowered the age limit for Respite funding. We added an income cap to respite services, and we have had to cut the hours we are available to answer phones and offer assistance and support.

Please consider returning at least this year cuts to our budget so that our families can continue to take advantage of this small, but very valuable program. I want to continue to be that voice on the other end of the phone for them. I want to continue to help support them to keep caring for their children at home which keeps the family together and saves the state a lot of money. I do not want to be the one telling them that there are no funds available because other items in the budget are more important than their children and their families.

If you have any questions I can answer, or help or resources we can provide you with, I can be reached at either 860-436-6544 or 203-641-0679 CTmedicalhome@FAVOR-CT.org

FACTS about CYSHCN RESPITE in your town by families currently being served

Numbers given below are by family, not by child. For more than 60% of these families, this program is the only help they get for their children. As of 10/1/2015

Andover		Cheshire	3	Fairfield	5	Lyme	1
Ansonia	11	Chester		Farmington	1	Madison	1
Ashford		Clinton	1	Franklin	1	Manchester	29
Avon	4	Colchester	1	Gales Ferry	2	Mansfield	1
Barkhamsted		Colebrook		Glastonbury	4	Marlborough	2
Ballouville		Collinsville		Goshen	1	Meriden	20
Baltic		Columbia	1	Granby	2	Middlebury	2
Bantum	1	Cornwall		Greenwich	4	Middlefield	
Beacon Falls	1	Coventry	3	Griswold	1	Middletown	16
Berlin	2	Cromwell	3	Groton	8	Milford	12
Bethany	3	Danielson	6	Guilford	4	Modus	1
Bethel	5	Danbury	26	Haddam	2	Monroe	2
Bethlehem		Darien	3	Hamden	20	Montville	1
Bloomfield	6	Dayville		Hampton		Morris	
Bolton	2	Deep River	1	Hanover	1	Mousup	2
Bozrah	1	Derby	1	Hartford	179	Mystic	3
Branford	2	Durham	1	Hartland		Naugatuck	13
Bridgeport	67	Eastford	1	Harwinton	3	New Britain	69
Bridgewater		East Granby	1	Hebron		New Canaan	4
Bristol	24	East Haddam		Ivoryton		New Fairfield	1
Broad Brook		East Hampton		Jewett City	2	New Hartford	1
Brookfield	2	East Hartford	46	Kennington		New Haven	99
Brooklyn		East Haven	4	Kent		Newington	8
Burlington	2	East Lyme	1	Killingly		New London	10
Cannan	1	Easton		Killingworth		New Milford	5
Canterbury		East Windsor	2	Lakeville	1	Newtown	1
Canton	1	Ellington	4	Lebanon	2	Niantic	2
Centerbrook		Enfield	19	Ledyard	2	Norfolk	1
Central Village	1	Essex	1	Lisbon		North Branford	2
Chaplin		Fallsville	1	Litchfield	2	North Canaan	

		Salisbury						
Northford	1	Sandy Hook	2		Trumbull	5		
No. Groversdale	2	Scotland			Uncasville	1		
North Haven	1	Seymour	5		Union	1		
No Stonington	1				Unionville	2		
Norwalk	39	Sharon	2		Vernon	9		
Norwich	14	Shelton	5		Voluntown	1		
Oakdale	1	Sherman			Wallingford	4		
Oakville	5	Simsbury	2		Warren			
Old Lyme	1	Somers			Washington			
Old Saybrook	3	So. Glastonbury			Waterbury	77		
Orange		So. Norwalk	1		Waterford	1		
Oxford		SO. Windsor	8		Watertown	5		
Pawcatuck		Southbury	2		Wauregan	1		
Pleasant Valley		Southport			Westbrook	1		
Plainfield	7	Southington	10		West Hartford	23		
Plainville	2	Sprague	1		West Haven	3		
Plantsville	3	Stafford	1		West Simsbury	1		
Plymouth	1	Stafford Springs	1		Weston	2		
Pomfret	1	Stamford	36		Westport	2		
Portland	1	Sterling			Wethersfield	14		
Preston		Stonington	2		Windsor	11		
Prospect	4	Storrs	1		Windsor Locks	7		
Putnam	5	Stratford	11		Willington	1		
Quaker Hill	2	Suffield	1		Willamantic	23		
Quinibaug	1	Taftville	1		Wilton	1		
Redding		Terryville	4		Winchester			
Ridgefield	1	Thomaston	3		Windham	1		
Rockfall	1	Thompson	1		Windsor	1		
Rockville		Tolland	4		Winstead	3		
Rocky Hill	4	Torrington	9		Wolcott	2		
Rogers					Woodbridge	1		
Roxbury					Woodbury	2		
Salem					Woodstock	1	Total: 1275	



**Connecticut Medical Home Initiative for
Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs***

Medical Home Initiative at FAVOR

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These are comments from families who received funds when reporting back on their expense reports.

The Respite Program has been a tremendous help to our family. As our daughter's condition gets worse, it helps us by allowing us to escape our day to day world and focus on what matters most- OUR FAMILY! And making memories we will always have.
A Family from Bloomfield

Thank-you so much for the respite check. You will never know how much it meant to me. My mother is going through Chemo treatments and I felt like I really needed to be there for her, but couldn't afford to travel. Then the check arrived. Tommy and I used it to drive home and spend 2 weeks with my folks. Tommy and my dad went fishing, hiking and lots of outside activities. I took my Mom to her treatments. You will never know how much this meant to all of us.
A Mom from East Haddam

I wanted to let you know how we spent our respite check. We love to get away for weekends, but my son screams when cooped up in a hotel room. We purchased camping equipment at COSTCO and went away for our first weekend. It was great to get away from home. Our other 2 kids had a good trip also. . No screaming! Now we can get away often. The break is great! It is really nice to do something as a family.
A Waterbury Family

I was so surprised when you told me I could hire someone to care for my daughter while my husband and I went out to dinner with our check. We have not ever left her, and haven't gone out to dinner alone since she was born seven years ago. It was heaven. We saved the rest to do it once a month for a few months. Just knowing we can get away has helped with the stress of her surgery planned for next month. I can't say thank-you enough times. We hope we will be able to get this help again in the future.

A Fairfield Family

We are so grateful for the check we recently got. My husband has been out of work for 8 months now and it has been very hard on our children, especially since one is autistic and his medical needs take so much of our money. I can only work so much and still it seems there is never anything left for an extra treat and the other 2 kids try not to complain. We have decided that every time we have to come into Hartford for medical appointments we will do something fun as a family on the way home with our funds. This way the money will last awhile and we will all get to relax together and have fun. We will send a picture of our family having fun together.
A family from No. Groversdale

We have 3 children all with different problems. We do not have any family in CT. We moved here for my husband's job, but it was very hard to leave our family and Ct is a very expensive place to live and I can't work since there is no one to watch the kids. Respite and the help of your money has made a very big difference for us. I took your advice and got volunteers to take the two boys out in the community. They are both doing scouts and swimming with their teen friends. I get to spend time with my daughter while they are out. We took our check and joined a YMCA so we all get to swim as a family as well as the kids taking swimming lessons. Thank-you to everyone in your program

3 happy kids in Groton

Thank-you for taking the time to speak with me the other day & sending me the application form. As a single mother of a 17-year-old daughter with a diagnosis of bipolar there are some days that are very hard to get through and I have no family to help. Thanks to your advice I did get a college student who will come and spend 4 hours twice a week with her either at my home or on campus. I am still looking for a home that would take her for a weekend now and again, but this has been a big help. You don't know how hard it is to be on duty 24-7. I work very limited hours since often her school time is the only sleep time I get. I look forward to getting a respite check from Title IV in the future. Thank-you so much.

Mom from Wilton

I was so excited to meet you at the conference recently. I do have a copy of the respite book, but had not filled it out till after we spoke. We used it this past weekend we left our 2 boys with Autism at home with an aide, and used our respite check to go away to a family wedding. The boys are 4 and 11 and it was the first time we have ever left them with someone else. It was so good to both get to go to a family event together. What a wonderful break. We look forward to getting back on the respite list and doing this again some time.

A Southington Family

It was such a surprise to get a check from your program the other day after we had just spoken and you gave so much help with figuring out how to transport my son home after his surgery. We are saving our funds till he is home and feeling better and then my wife and I plan on some date nights out for dinner with no kids. We have never left my son before, but you are right we do need a break. This is a wonderful program!

Dad from Woodstock

What a great idea you gave me. When I called your office for help I really didn't think I could afford Respite care for my mother. Now I have signed up for a program with the Area Agency on Aging just as you suggested. It worked so well I decided to try a volunteer like you suggested to help keep Mom busy and free some of my time. A young nursing student from a local program has been lined up to come sit and read to Mom two afternoons a week. I feel like a new person. I am not alone and I can now go visit my grandchildren and see their sports activities with out worrying about Mom. I wish I had found this help earlier. I will spread the word to other friends that are caring for their elderly parents that help is available.

Family caregiver in Torrington.

Wanted to let you know we got your respite check in the mail last week and we immediately signed both kids up for 2 weeks of summer camp. They are so excited to get a chance to go to camp like other kids from school. With all our medical bills they have never been able to go before. Thank-you Thank-you

2 happy kids from Clintonville

My family was in desperate need when our respite check arrived. We both really needed to get away from it all, and our parents were also having medical issues they needed help with. I got to spend some time with my other son while a sitter watched my boy. We also got a sitter to stay with the boys for a few days while we went to visit and help our parents. It was time I really needed to recoup to be able to care for my son.

A Waterbury Family

We use our respite check for camp whenever we get one. My daughter loves her week at camp but without your help we would not be able to send her as my wife stays home to care for her and with all our medical bills it is very hard to provide extras on one check. Thank-you for your help.

A Dad from Stratford

Respite is very important to our family. My husband travels a lot for business which means I am the only parent home with 3 children. My son has CP and uses a wheelchair all the time. He is also nonverbal, so it is hard to find someone willing to care for him. After school programs won't take him so I do all his care. I also care for my mother who lies in the next town, but barely can lie alone any more. She used to be my back up. We really appreciate that week off we get when he goes to the respite center. My other kids also really like the special attention they get during that week also.

A Mom from Cromwell

I was able to hire extra child care and work a few more shift this summer so I could buy my kids clothes and school supplies. We also went and had fun in the amusement parks twice during the summer. I was really glad this panned out for us finally because I have 3 kids with impairments of different kinds. This makes it hard to find a sitter and expensive.

A Bristol Mom

The respite check came just at the right day. We were going to visit grandma, my daughter's favorite person. The air conditioner in the car died. We were staying home since my daughter can't travel with out it. I had no idea how I would tell her the trip was off. I said a prayer to give me the words I needed, and half an hour later the mail came and there was our respite check. The next day we again left on our trip with AC working. It was the best break we could have gotten.

A grateful Mom in Barkhamstead

You ask why respite is important to our family. Siblings need time also. My twins need not to feel like it is their fault we never get out. My husband works hard to support us and help with the twins when he is home. He deserves a night out once in awhile. We try to stretch our respite checks over 5 or 6 months. A movie night with siblings one month, dinner out one month, you get it. It is what keeps us going. I wish there were more funds available to families like this.

Thanks from Madison Ct

We received our respite check in the mail today. The suggestion list was a big help. We went over night to Co-Co Key Resort and my son thought it was the best thing he had ever done. The Hotel had a list of local sitters available and for the first time ever since we had kids, my husband and I went to dinner alone. (Knowing we were in the same building). It was heaven! We have made reservations to have a fall weekend in Mystic. These great memories will keep us going over many of the rough days. We can't thank you enough.

A New Milford Family

My children go to camp for the first time this year. Thank-you. God Bless. We never think we get help like this for our children.

A Thankful Bridgeport Family

We were so thankful for the respite. We have 4 children. We decided to send our son George to a typical preschool camp this summer. It was a perfect transition before entering the town preschool. He felt like his siblings going off to camp this summer.

A Greenwich Family

We want to thank you for our respite check. It has provided physical relief. My daughter is unable to support herself and she is very heavy. Being able to hire someone to help me with dressing, bathing, feeding etc allows me to stay strong in order to care for her in the long run.

A CT CYSHCN's Family

Thank-you for the money. It gave us the chance to relax and not stress about not having the money or time to ever go somewhere to enjoy life. We enjoy our little break so much.

A New Britain

Family

Thank-you Thank-you I use it to pay for an afterschool program with other children for my son. It was really a wonderful thing.

A Windsor Mom

Easy for children to go to camp. It so help us with what it costs. It was fun to have some time just parents while children at camp. Thanks.

A Norwalk Family

Thank-you for the check. It assisted me to bring my son to the amusement park and then my friend took him for me for a day and took him to the movies. I very appreciate it and thank you also because we bought him a bike to ride like other kids do.

A Plainfield Family

We got our respite check a few weeks ago and I took your advice and hired a mother's helper to come out with my daughter and I on our errands. It has made a huge difference in my day and our week. My husband was so grateful for the smile when he came into the house on Friday, and enjoyed the special dinner I had made for all of us while someone else watched my daughter. I think I will try your idea about using a girl scout next. I can't thank you enough for the funds and your suggestions on how to lower the stress level with it in our home. I can't wait till I can attend one of your respite workshops.
A stressed out Mom in Plainfield

This check enabled myself and my husband to send my son to camp where he could enjoy his summer with kids who don't have medical issues. It enabled us to do daily tasks without worry about his needs. It enable all of us to enjoy summer for the first time. We can't thank you enough and look forward to the next time we get help like this. This is the only help we have ever gotten for our family.
A Family from Hebron

This money helped us to send our kids to summer camp this year. Special camp is expensive and we were trying to make payments, but were just not up to date. When your check came it let bus make the last payment so both our children got to go to camp this summer. I hope we can get this again.
New Milford Family

With twins with autism summer is long and we just couldn't afford the type of camp they needed. Then your check came. Camp was great. We need to know how to get these funds again next year. Thank you so much.

A Family in Gaylordsville

I had been waiting for these funds for a long time. It came just in time for my sons birthday. This made it possible for my son to have his first Chucky Cheese Party like many of the kids at school. I bought him books for his birthday. We also went on 2 family trips. One to Lake Compounce and one to Orchard Beach. This program was a blessing. I am still not working, but when he goes back to school I hoe to work again. Bless You.
A Hartford Family

We took a family trip to 3 baseball games. I think my son now understands the game and so we bought him a bat and ball. I hope and dream that next year he will be able to play like the other boys on our street.
A Family in Woodbur

When our house burned down and my daughter was very badly burned I worried she would never enjoy summer again. When you helped me with these forms you gave me some information on a Burn Camp for children who had burns too. I never thought my daughter would go since we have so little money but you told me to call. She was accepted to go this year and you were right it was free, but she needed a lot of special stuff to go. Then your check came and we bought her all the supplies she needed to go. I just cried as she said goodbye and ran off with her new friend who had also been burned in a house fire. The child I got back at the end of the week was a new child! We can never thank you enough for the check and the information on the camp you gave us. It has really changed all our lives.
A New London Family

We were able to spend some awesome time together and enjoy life without worry of doctors, hospitals, illness or bills. It was really relaxing and brought us much closer together. The kids got to be just kids and had big smiles. We really appreciate this help so much! It really brought us together as a family together. We hope we will be eligible again soon.

Sterling Family

It helped my family so we can go places together and also my husband and I get a babysitter and go out alone first time since my son born 10 years ago. I wish all families get a chance like this. Money is hard but this was so big for us. Thank-you

A Family from Bridgeport

We were so thankful when we got this money. We went on line and all studied places we wanted to go. We vote, and we each pick a day trip. It made US A REAL FAMILY NOT PATIENTS FOR THOSE DAYS. We thank you so much. Please tell us what we need to do to get these funds again. It was a long time since we signed up and I don't remember what we need to do.

A West Hartford Family

This is the first time I got respite. It really helped for the better. I am going to school and also care for my son. This allowed me to hire someone to do fun things with him while I study so I do not feel guilty not to play with him. The time off was great. I really appreciate this program.

A Single Mom in West Haven

I am Mia's primary caregiver and I rarely get a break. We joined a pool and my husband will be taking Mia swimming while they bond. We have also picked a night a week that we will go to the pool as a family. This way our respite check will work for us for many months. We are so appreciative for this help which makes us feel like a regular family.

A Cheshire Family

I have not had a vacation since we had kids. With all their health issues we just don't leave them with anyone else. So we have decided I am going to get away with a friend and my husband will do the child care. Next time can be his turn. You asked how much we thought we would need a year. I think three checks like this. One for each parent to get away, and one for some family outings. But we appreciate what we got so much.

A Mom from Hamden, Ct

Thank you for the bonus check. I sent my son to a summer program that included Physical therapy and fun playing. This left me one on one time with my daughter. It really made our summer special. I wish I had found you sooner and look forward to getting funds again.

A Family from Branford, Ct

*This has helped pay for care for my son. It is hard to find a camp or daycare to take him because he needs to take meds while he is there, but we found a day camp and also used his counselor to babysit a few times at our house. We really appreciate this. I do wish the processing time was less, it took almost a year to get this check and now I was told I have to wait a year to apply again. If I can help in anyway to make that happen faster, please let me know. Thanks
A Stamford Family*

The Money I got was so helpful. We went as a family out to dinner and a movie a few times. We also got a sitter so we could get out as a couple alone. This was the first time we have left the kids since my son was born. It was very special to us. I Think this program is great. I was sorry to hear I can't get this every year, but it made such a difference to our family that we will be happy to wait.

Groton. Ct

It really helped me in this economic time to be able to do some fun things with my kids ad a family. Without this help we had to stay home all summer as I lost my job and my insurance and have no help. This was wonderful. We all thank you.

A Stratford Family

I could get a break from my 3 disable grandchildren. 3 days off and away in Bridgeport and now I can handle their problems again. I thank you so much to understand what it is like 24 hour a day here. I hope this comes again.

A Grandmother from West Haven

The r5espite money has given our family a chance to have recreational activities together throughout the summer like other families do. We are so Happy! How do we stay in the program so we can get this again?
Willamantic CT

Getting these respite funds has allowed me to do errands, which is next to impossible with my kids along. I allowed me a little time to my self, to think. It is very hard having to take my clinging daughter along every where and not know how she will behave. Thank-you.
Southington, Ct

just started my son on a gluten free diet so I was able to buy a special cookbook, and I did sign up for the food program you suggest because they do a special Allergy/ Gluten Free package. I can't thank you enough. Both the money and the information was invaluable. We have enough left for a parents night out for our anniversary.

No.Branford,CT

Thank you so much for the funds. It helped us take Katie on a great family vacation with horseback riding, swimming, and fishing. It was a blast. We all really enjoyed it.

A Westport Family

We got our check & used your suggested list of activities. We found a discount day at the indoor water park and had a great time. Another day we did the indoors mini golf which was really fun. You were right we found lots of great summer activities at reasonable prices which kept us cool and out of the sun. It was great to be a real family again. Can't wait till it is our turn for funds again. Thomaston Family

This was a great way for my daughter to get to go to camp. She made friends, good social interaction for her, and allowed me to work a little this summer. Great for us both. Hope we can do this again next summer.

West Hartford, Ct

It provided me with funds to hire someone to help me take my twins to appointments safely. It allowed me another adult in the house to help while my husband was away. I appreciate any help our family gets with 2 young children on the spectrum.

A New London Family

This check allowed me to send my daughter to Camp Harkness for a week. It allowed us a week apart which we all needed. It was just wonderful. Thanks. I hope I can get more funds next time.

Uncasville, Ct

It was great to get away. We used our funds for a weekend sitter so we could get away. As you suggested we asked her school aide if she would be available, and she loved the idea. Wish we could get funds to do this every few months. Our daughter's needs are so intense and this is the only program we qualify for. Thanks A Fairfield Family

Let me tell you I haven't gone out ever since my son got diagnosed with Autism. So I got a couple of babysitters and paid them while his father and I went out. Thank-you so much. I really needed this as we have been under so much stress lately. There is so much to learn when you have a child like this. I really needed a break for me. My son is like the energizer bunny, He just keeps going and going ad going. I can't say thank you enough. We need more programs like this so families can stay together and raise their special children.

New Haven, Ct

This allowed me to get away for a few days of R&R and know that my daughter was well taken care of. When I got back I spent the rest on a family dinner out and a movie. It was fun to be normal again. Oxford, C

I Waited so long for this money. It allowed me to take my kids to the beach because I could hire someone to go with me to help with my son. It was his first time at the beach and he had a smile on his face all day. I got to relax and it was special for all of us. The second time we went we took my son's father with us so he could see how happy this made his boy. We will always remember this special summer because of these funds. We bought a camera and took pictures, the only ones I have of my son. Thank you so much.

A

Bridgeport Mom

I used my check for camp for my son while I worked. This gave us funds to go on a family trip the end of the summer. I really appreciated this. All the other sources of respite we have gotten in the past have dried up. Stratford, Ct

Both of us were unemployed this summer. I did get a few hours as a hostess, but that was it. We were really down and stressed. When the check came we packed up the car and off to Grandmas we went. It always helps to be home and it is so good for my kids to spend time with their grandparents. Thank you so much. Is there anything else our family can qualify for in these difficult times?

A Norwich Family

We have had the worst year. Second child was given a diagnosis, my husband lost his job, and it seems like there is just no help out there for us. Then your check arrived. We tried to spread it as much as we could. We bought favorite foods and went on picnics as a family. We helped a school clothes swap that got us first pick at some clothes. We found an outside movie night to go to as a family. And we splurged and went to the new indoor water park for a special Autism event. We are holding money out so we can go to the next sensory free movie showing you talked about. We really appreciated all these breaks and a chance to be a real family even in these rough times. Manchester Family

Stephen was able to be part of a toddler & Mom play group this summer and we also took swim lessons. It was great to be with other Moms and not worry about therapy, meds etc. We really thought a lot about how to spend this before we signed up for anything. This is a perfect program. Please don't go away or close down.

A Simsbury Family

We used our funds to go on a family vacation. We went to an all-inclusive resort to try and make it easy for my daughter. Travel was hard, but once we were there it was wonderful. I think this is an enormous help to families with special needs members. Our daily needs are so stressful and we really need to plan breaks in, but with lots of medical bills the funds are just not always there. I am going to take your advice and look for a scout volunteer to help in the afternoon with kids to give me a little break and give my daughter some special attention. Thank you so much this is a wonderful program for families. Trumbull Family of

Thank you. I could get a break from 3 kids disabled I have in my house. I got 3 days off and went away. I like this program because I could get a break. It is real hard to get a break because I have 3 disabled kids here. I hope I do again- Could use more next time to go a little longer. A Bridgeport Mom

I have no problem spending. My son has wanted to take golf lessons for over a year. I take him for lessons and sit in the sun and watch. It does my heart good to watch my sick child be so happy. With him being in the hospital so much it was so much fun to watch him do something normal. Thank-you again. We wait till it is our turn again.

RIDGEFIELD FAMILY

I got my check and I found a volunteer to help with my son. Now he is going to go to horseback riding every Saturday with her and I will have every Saturday morning to either take my other daughter out, or just do whatever I feel like. This is a great feeling of freedom as my son needs someone watching him every minute if the day. Thank you.

A Mom from Plainfield

We all need to work on our marriage...we've been married for 35 years and have 5 kiddos with different disabilities. It has been very stressful, but we try to always save time for each other. All of my children have always had a 9:00 pm time to go into their bedroom. They don't need to go to sleep, they can watch tv, talk on the phone, play Nintendo or what not until their bedtime, (depending on their age.) This gives my husband and I a few hours of "quality time". We also try to go away for 1 night every few months. We go on school days so we only need someone to watch each child for one night and they are in school the rest of the time. We just returned from a wonderful autumn weekend away and it is just what we needed to recharge our batteries. Inexpensive hotels can be found online. We fund these trips with our respite check. If we did not have these practices in place I am sure our marriage would not have survived. Thank-you so much.

A Stafford Springs Family

Much thanks and God Bless You and your program. I was proud to tell my family that our state has a program like this to help families. We take our check and go spend a few days with the cousins. My family watches the kids for me while they all play and I get to rest for a few days and we spend time as a couple. It be good that my kids all play with the cousins and not be sick or at the doctors. Thank you. Tell me how we get this again?

Norwalk family

We were so surprised and happy when we opened our mail and there was our respite check. I held onto it a few days before even depositing it to think about how best to spend it. We decided a date night would be very special so I set about looking for a baby sitter to cover my son's care. I remembered your suggestions about college students in related study areas, so I called ROST and got contact info for an early childhood major. That set, we made a reservation and had our first date night with no kids since my son was born. We also decided to find an activity for my son and signed up for a kids craft class for my son and found a girl scout (as you suggested) to go with him as an aide. He loves the class, has made friends there and can't wait to go each week. My daughter and I use the time to do "girl things" together each week. Our check has made such a huge difference in our lives!

A Mom from North Haven

The funds we got were so appreciated, but not enough. We have 3 children all with special needs and someone has a bad day everyday. I think each child should get a check, not one for the family. I wish there were more programs for families like this. We really need more help but are always told we make too much, even though we can't even get through all the bills most months.

Mom in Ansonia

This program is the best. It could only be better if we got funding every year. We use our funds for my son to go to camp during the summer, while parents go away for the week. We did try Camp Harkness like you suggested at the end of the summer. All of us and a high school student to help chase our son around. A great time was had by all. If you hear of any other funds we might be able to sign up for -for the other years, please let me know. This is the only help we get outside of school and it made a huge difference for us.

Family in

Cromwell

God Bless you all! Your check came just in time for me. I am a single mother with 3 children plus my niece. I work full time, but it just never seems to be enough. I recently had surgery but had no idea how I was going to get enough help to cover my kids for a few days. Especially my oldest son who has autism. He doesn't deal with change well and I knew this was to be an issue. I remember we talked about resources and solutions, but I just didn't have the funds I needed. With your funds I was able to have a college student stay here to watch him near me so he wasn't as effected as I worried about. It worked out so well and I now know a system that works for him if we need it in the future. Thank you so much. I can't say enough good things about this program.

Mom and Kids from Hartford

We held onto our check for a few weeks to decide best how to spend it. I decided best was a special time each month. So the first month I hired a sitter and went out with the girls from work. The second month we went to the movies as a family, something we had never done before. We skipped the next month, but then we had a family member watch kids and went out for a parents dinner. I went bowling with my 2 older kids while a sitter watched the little guy the next month. I took a helper with me to the pool so my son could try it out and I would have extra help. It was a great experience for both of us, and found out my son could use the child room there so we used the rest of our funds to join the pool. We are enjoying swimming and taking classes there and even meet another family with a child with autism. We also found a support group that meets there and a sibling group. We are so thankful for the funds and your help with ideas on breaks that would work for our family. We look forward to getting funds again in the future. RESpite is very important for the whole family.

Family from Union

The funds we got were so appreciated, but not enough. We have 3 children all with special needs and someone has a bad day everyday. I think each child should get a check, not one for the family. I wish there were more programs for families like this. We really need more help but are always told we make too much, even though we can't even get through all the bills most months.

Mom in Ansonia